

"Who blessed mankind and humanised the world."

"The mighty dead

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN

AND

Record of Unitarian Worthies

BEING A HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN REFORMATION OF RELIGION IN EUROPE AND AMERICA
DURING THE LAST THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

With some Account of the most Notable Works written by Unitarians.

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TO THE SUBSCRIBERS.

As I am often asked for back copies of the CHRISTIAN FREEMAN to complete volumes for the binders, and can only supply at times some of the numbers wanted, I would now beg of the subscribers to this new series of papers, THE RECORD OF UNITARIAN WORTHIES, as the value of the volume will to a large extent depend on its completeness, not to lose any of the monthly parts. I can make no promise of supplying the back numbers hereafter to complete the volumes. We are printing monthly 5500 copies, and only a few of these are now reserved to bind into volumes, on the completion of the work.

R. SPEARS.

THE LAUGHING LADDIE OF ESKDALE.

ONE hundred and fifteen years ago the wife of a shepherd, who tended his master's flocks in the pastures of Dumfriesshire, gave birth to a son. The father died the same year, and poor Janet, the widow, was left to struggle as best she might in the endeavour to bring up her fatherless boy. She worked hard day and night, and trusted in God; never grumbling nor complaining, but putting her shoulder to what had to be done with a bright face and a cheerful spirit. By-and-by, as soon as the little fellow was old enough, she put him to the parish school. Some of her neighbours advised her to send him out to beg, but, poor as she had long been, it was never in the staunch Scotch heart of her to beg for herself, much less to set her darling at it.

At school little Tam seemed different from the other boys. He was not remarkably bright or quick, but was always wanting to know how to do a thing, and then how to make it useful. Tam could only attend school during four months of winter; for, being old enough for school, he was old enough for work, and therefore in the summer, after his mother's prayer and a hymn, he had every morning to be off to the hillsides looking after the flocks of sheep as his father had done before him. But boys do not learn all they know in the school-house; at least Tam did not. Every

book he could borrow he took into the pasture, and studied it there. And then there were the misty crags garmented in the thunder when the tempest came, and the warbling of the lark high up in the blue depths, and the torrent dashing down the ravine, and the glassy surface of the silver tarn lulled in the bosom of the mountain. There were the four Gospels, too, every word of which he could repeat when he was seven years old. These were Tam's schoolmasters, quite as much as the dominie of Westerkirk.

The boy in time grew to a sturdy lad, stout of heart and brawny of limb, and finally got himself apprenticed to a stonemason. The work suited him exactly, and he wrought at it for years, toiling in the open air by day, and greedily devouring by night, by the light of his mother's fire, as many books as he could beg, buy, or borrow. Far and wide he was noted for his animal spirits. His nature bubbled over with waggishness, frolic, and laughter. Country-side folk said that the bare sight of him was a cure for the blues, and called him "The Laughing Laddie of Eskdale." But Tam was not always laughing, as we shall presently see.

In 1780, the boy, now a man, set out for Edinburgh in search of better employment. He found it, and worked there for

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two years as a stonemason, all the while studying. He then set out for London, got a job at the quadrangle of Somerset Place buildings, studied when off work all the public edifices in the great metropolis, and was so intelligent in conversation and respectful in manner that he made friends with the distinguished architects of the day.

His services now began to be in requisition. What he did was so well done, what he suggested was so clearly said, that he was sent to Portsmouth Dockyard to erect an official mansion and chapel. While doing this, study, which was his law, was directed to the foundation and construction of graving docks, wharves, and walls. Remaining for three years, he was invited into Shropshire, to superintend alterations about to be made in the Castle of Shrewsbury. This he executed so well that he was elected surveyor of public works for the county.

Our Laughing Laddie is Tam no longer. The shepherd's boy, who, taking his mother's morning kiss, went laughing and frolicking out on the braes five and twenty years ago, is now Mr. Thomas Telford, about whose works all the world is talking. And well they might talk. From that date onward for forty years he was the great engineer of Europe. In conception, description, and execution of the mightiest works of internal improvements, the apprenticed stonemason of Westerkirk has never had an equal. His history is the history of English engineering.

We can do no more than refer to some of the works which made Telford's name famous and loaded him with honours. He conducted the Ellesmere Canal across the River Dee, seventy feet above its bed; he threw, as if with the magic skill of Aladdin's lamp, at a height of one hundred and twenty-seven feet above the same river, the Ponteyslite Aqueduct; and by means of the Caledonian Canal, which at that date was the grandest specimen of inland navigation the world had ever seen, he poured the waters of the North Sea, in spite of unforseen difficulties and almost insuperable obstacles, into the Atlantic.

In 1808 he was invited by the King to visit Sweden. "If the Bereneau can be joined to the Baltic," the Swedes had been saying for twenty years, "then the sun would shine in Northland." But the Swedish engineers feared failure. Our stonemason said "Yes" when he had traversed the rugged hills which separate the two waters; and in three years the long

gondolas, guided by Norwegian fishermen, were floating from Stockholm to Christiana, on the waters of the Skager Rack. Telford returned home, knighted by the Swedish king, and idolised by his people.

To this day travellers come from every part of the world to see the Menai Suspension Bridge. It is flung across the straits like a bow in the heavens. The tallest masted ships ride beneath it. In design and workmanship it is even yet unequalled. And, as for beauty, there is not a ruined temple in Greece, nor a statue in the Vatican, that surpasses it. Graceful and light in appearance as a spider's web, picturesque, as surveyed from the neighbouring cliffs, beyond representation, and solid as the everlasting rocks which form its piers; it is a monument to native genius—the noblest in the world. So long as it spans the waters, Telford's name will not be forgotten.

Our hero reached the age of seventy-seven, great in intellect and good in heart; proud of his power as a man in the presence of men, humble as a follower of Jesus in the presence of God. He died in 1834. The British nation honoured his memory with a public funeral, and his remains rest in Westminster Abbey. Excepting the case of the great and good Faraday, who, from the stable room over a London mews to the lecture desk in the Royal Institution, walked all the way with God, I know of no instance where simple faith went hand in hand through life with mighty intellect more striking than that furnished by the Laughing Laddie of Eskdale.

A PRAYER FOR REST.

Give rest, O God, to me,
The power to lean on Thee
In sweet repose.
Give rest to weary thought,
In trust, in doubt, in aught
Assayed, let truth be sought
From Him who knows.

Give rest, O God, in sorrow;
Give peace that need not borrow
From joys to be;
That always finds Thee nearest,
Thy care and love the clearest,
'Mid loss of things the dearest,
Can I lose Thee?

Give rest, O God, in love.
The thought Thou art above
Brings comfort blest.
We know Thee ever near,
We know there's naught to fear,
We know that now and here
Are peace and rest. —Independent.

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS.

It is said by those who deny the authority and lordship of Jesus, "The fundamental truths of Christianity are self-evident. They reveal themselves to consciousness; they are verified by experience; they are written on the heart of man. We believed them, not because they were uttered eighteen hundred years ago, but because they have the spontaneous and irrepressible testimony of our own souls." I reply, You are conscious of the circulation of the blood. You feel it as you lay your fingers on your wrist, your hand on your heart. But before Harvey announced this circulation, it was no less real, yet was not an object of consciousness to the most acute physiologist. It is one thing to discover, quite another to recognise and verify, the facts of consciousness. If the truths of Christianity are intuitive and self-evident, how is it that they formed no part of any man's consciousness till the advent of Christ? How is it that they are not springing up to-day in the consciousness of astute and speculative men in China and in India? How is it that the only regions in which this consciousness is attained are those in which the words of Jesus are familiarly known, and that the very men who have this independent consciousness of their truth have, without an exception, been trained in converse with the evangelic record?

But it is said, The human mind reaches not its full development in any one individual or age. Each generation is heir of the attainments, the discovered truths, of all preceding generations. The discoveries of one age are the axioms of the next. The child begins where the father left off. Christianity marks the highest religious development of its own age, the ripened product of the religious wisdom of preceding ages. Jesus was the representative religious genius of his time, yet only its natural growth; and as he exceeded all that went before him, so there will come after him those greater than he. I reply by asking, Where was the heritage to which he succeeded? Was it in his own nation, in the pitiful drivellings of the Rabbis of which we have full record? Or was it in the more cultivated nations of classic fame? Many of you are familiar with the Greek and Latin authors before, at, and after the Christian era. Do you find in them the remotest approach to Christianity—the faintest token of a religious development which culminated

in the Gospel? Virgil, Ovid, and Horace flourished in the generation immediately preceding the promulgation of Christianity. Do they indicate a high stage of religious progress?

A little before the Christian era the *Pontifex Maximus* proposed in the Roman Senate that the traitors convicted of participation in Cataline's conspiracy should not be put to death, but should be subjected to imprisonment, chains, and privation as long as they lived, because death, being the end of life, was, of course the end of suffering. He accompanied the proposal with a sneer at the old fables about Tartarus, and the sentiment was received without rebuke or dissent. Does this denial of immortality by the most august and enlightened assembly on earth indicate a hopeful stage of human progress toward the clear and confident enunciation of that truth so shortly afterward from the lips of Jesus?

Moreover, if Christ's wisdom only marked a stage in the natural development of human thought, how is it that the greater than Christ is yet to come? Why is it that hitherto the wisest and best have been his followers, and that those who have most outgrown their fellows have still ascribed to him all they have and are? Is there not a very strong prestige in behalf of one whose wisdom and purity thus set him apart from, and raised above, the men of his own and succeeding ages? Especially if he, the most lowly and modest of beings, yet asserts his own pre-eminent right to reverence and confidence; if, while performing the most menial of offices, as he moves from disciple to disciple with the basin and the towel, he yet tells them they say well when they call him Lord and Master—is there not at least a probability that they said well?

But we want more than this. We want his credentials. We want positive proof of his especially Divine commission, of his right to the eminence unrivalled and alone among the sons of men, on which he evidently claims to stand. No one who regards the Gospels as literally or substantially true can call this right in question. If Jesus wrought the Divine work which those books ascribe to him—if he received the visible and audible attestations from heaven which they record—if he actually rose from the dead as they relate—then no one can doubt that he was ordained and sent by God as our Master and Lord. How stands the proof?—*Rev. Dr. A. P. Peabody.*

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

CHARITY v. WIT.—There will come a time when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit.—*Hooker*.

THE FEW AND THE MANY.—That orthodoxy has commonly been in error is plain from this, that orthodoxy is another name for the opinion of the majority, and in religious disputes the majority has, for the most part, been wrong. And this is only saying in other words that truth has commonly been known and believed by few. Besides, orthodoxy does not always mean what the majority really believe, but only what the majority find it convenient to profess.—*Dr. Lee*.

ORTHOGRAPHY AND ORTHODOXY.—A well-known English divine, opposed to reform in spelling as in everything, once declared that the fearful orthography of English formed the best psychological foundation of English orthodoxy, because a child that had once been brought to believe that t-h-r-o-u-g-h sounded like "through," t-h-o-u-g-h like "though," r-o-u-g-h like "rough," would afterwards believe anything.—*Max Müller*.

AN INCONSISTENT CALVINIST.—All men have their likes and dislikes. The Rev. Joseph Mottey particularly disliked the doctrine of original sin. A neighbouring minister of his stoutly defended this doctrine, and affirmed that we were all born in sin and children of the devil. Mr. Mottey meeting his neighbour soon after having heard that his friend had had a daughter born to him, he asked what he had called her. "Angelina," was the reply. "Angelita," said Mr. Mottey, "I should think that with your notions you would have called her Beelzebub."

ALL THE SAINTS AT FAULT.—It is said that Dr. Priestley seldom joked, yet there was one anecdote—the following—he used to relate with humour:—A devout Portuguese farmer, greatly perplexed about his cows staying away at night, at length resolved to give them in charge of his tutelary saint when he turned them out every morning to their rambles at large. To his great joy he found that his trusting invocations were now rewarded by the punctual return home of the cows every evening. The good man, however, being about to leave home for some days, directed his daughter's attention to the change which they had observed in the cows' behaviour, and explained to her the cause of it. "Now remember," says he, "every morning while I am away, when you turn them out, to give them particularly into the care of Saint J." The girl promised to do as he ordered, but by the following morning, when sending off the cows, she had wholly forgotten the name of the saint. Anxious, however, to do the best she could, she committed them to the charge of *all the saints*. Night after night came, but neither night nor saints brought home the cows. At length her father returned, and soon and eagerly inquired of her whether the cows had always come home. "Oh, indeed, father, they have never been home since." "And did you," said he, "give them into the charge of Saint J.?" "Why, I'll tell you, father, exactly how it was: I could not for my life recall the name of that saint of yours, and so I gave them into the care of all the saints; and as he was among them, I thought it would all be right." "Oh yes," said he, "that is always the way; what is everybody's business is nobody's business."

SNOBS.—The word does not exist in France, because they have not the thing. The snob is the child of aristocratical societies; perched on the step of the long ladder, he respects the man on the round above him, and despises the man on the step below, without inquiring what they are worth solely on account of their position; in his innermost heart it is natural to kiss the boots of the first, and kick the second.—*Taine's "English Literature."*

STRENGTH WITHOUT JUSTICE.—You would be indignant if you saw a strong man walk into a theatre or a lecture-room, and calmly choosing the best place take his feeble neighbour by the shoulder and turn him out of it into the back seats or the street. You would be equally indignant if you saw a stout fellow thrust himself up to a table where some hungry children were being fed, and reach his arm over their heads and take their bread from them. But you are not the least indignant if when a man has stoutness of thought and swiftness of capacity, and, instead of being long-armed only, has the much greater gift of being long-headed—you think it perfectly just that he should use his intellect to take the bread out of the mouths of all the other men in the town who are of the same trade with him; or use his breadth and sweep of sight to gather some branch of the commerce of the country into one great cobweb of which he is himself to be the central spider, making every thread vibrate with the points of his claws, and commanding every avenue with the facets of his eyes. You see no injustice in this.—*Ruskin*.

SCPTICISM.—And it will be seen that the lamentable stage to which his logic at present has brought him ("Arthur Pendennis") is one of general scepticism and sneering acquiescence in the world as it is; or, if you like so to call it, a belief qualified with scorn in all things extant. . . . And to what does this easy and sceptical life lead a man? Friend Arthur was a Sadducee, and the Baptist might be in the wilderness shouting to the poor, who were listening with all their might and faith to the preacher's awful accents and denunciations of wrath or woe or salvation; and our friend the Sadducee would turn his sleek mule, with a shrug and a smile, from the crowd, and go home to the shade of his terrace, and muse over preacher and audience, and turn to his roll of Plato, or his pleasant Greek song-book, babbling of honey and Hybla, and nymphs and fountains and love. To what, we say, does this scepticism lead? It leads a man to a shameful loneliness and selfishness, so to speak, the more shameful because it is so good-humoured and conscienceless and serene. Conscience! What is conscience? Why accept remorse! What is public or private faith? Myths alike enveloped in enormous tradition.—*Thackeray*.

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